

Message Text

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S E C R E T DAMASCUS 1511

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN VIEWS ON LATEST PALESTINIAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. DURING A JULY 28 CALL ON GENERAL HIKMAT SHIHABI, CHEIF, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, A BRIEF DISCUSSION ENSUED ON CURRENT PALESTINIAN DEVELOPMENT. GENERAL SHIHABI EXPRESSED HIS DISPLEASURE AT THE RECENT EGYPTIAN/JORDANIAN COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH THE TWO PARTIES RECOGNIZED JORDANIAN REPRESENTATION OF PALESTINAINS LIVING WITHIN JORDAN WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE REMAINDER OF THE PALESTINIANS ARE REPRESENTED BY THE PLO. SHIHABI INDICATED THAT EGYPT AND JORDAN APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO SETTLE THE MATTER OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH THE PALESTINAIN (BY THIS HE OBVIOUSLY MEANT THE PLO) AND THAT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE. WITHOUT BEING EXPLICIT SHIHABI IMPLIED THAT SYRIA WAS NOT GOING TO ABANDON THE PLO OR "THE PALESTINIANS" AS HE KEPT CALLING THEM. HE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT JORDAN AND KING HUSSEIN HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN ARRIVING AT A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BUT THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH "THE PALESTINIANS." HE OBSERVED THAT THUSFAR THE ISRAELIS HAVE BEEN BLIND TO THIS FACT BUT THAT THE ARABS COULD NOT LET THIS BLINDNESS DETER THEM FROM CONTINUING TO SUPPORT EVERY EFFORT TO WORK FOR "THE JUST RIGHTS OF THE

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PALESTINIANS." HE ADMITTED THAT THERE ARE EXTREMISTS ON

THE ARAB SIDE AND THAT THE ARAB AND PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE TO BE REALISTIC IN WHAT THEY COULD EXPECT TO ACHIEVE. HE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE COORDINATION AMONG EGYPT, JORDAN AND SYRIA AND THE PALESTINIANS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A JUST SOLUTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN IN LIGHT OF PRESENT REALITIES.

2. COMMENT: H IT WAS ABVIOUS TO ME FROM SHIHABI'S MANNER OF SPEAKING ABOUT THE RECENT COMMUNIQUE THAT THE SYRIANS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY HAPPY ABOUT IT PRIMARILY BECUASE IT MAY WELL BE PUTTING SYRIA IN A DIFFICULT AND EMBARRASSING POSITION BETWEEN THE PLO ON ONE SIDE AND EGYPT AND JORDAN ON THE OTHER. AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS ABVIOUS TO ME THAT SYRIA IS TRYING TO PERSUE A VERY CAUTIOUS POLICY WHICH WHILE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS OF THE PALESTINIANS ALSO FULLY APPRECIATES THE CURRENT REALITIES.
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